



## BOIL WATER NOTICES

### Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Residents & Homeowners

#### Can I use my drinking water for cooking?

- Any water used for food preparation or cooking should be boiled first or be from an acceptable alternate source, such as bottled water. Bring water to a **full rolling boil** for at least **one minute** before adding the food item, like when you make pasta. Water that slightly boils for a longer time is also protective (for example, cooking beans or boiling chicken for 10 - 20 minutes).

#### How should I wash fruit and vegetables and make ice?

- Fruits, vegetables, and any other foods that will not be cooked should be washed and rinsed with boiled (and then cooled) water or bottled water. Ice should also be made with either boiled water or bottled water.

#### Can I use my water for making baby formula or drinks?

- **No**—Any water used for baby food, formula, or making beverages must be boiled (and then cooled!) or bottled.

#### Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing dishes?

- Temporarily, consider using disposable dishes, cups and utensils.
- Hand-washed dishes: **No**—Use boiled (then cooled) water, bottled water, or after washing with dish detergent rinse for a minute in a dilute bleach (1 tablespoon of unscented bleach per gallon of water). Allow dishes, cutlery, cups, etc. to completely air dry before use.
- Home dishwasher: **Yes**, if the hot wash is **at least 170° F** and includes a **full dry cycle**. However, most home dishwashers do not reach this temperature. If you are uncertain of the temperature of your dishwasher, rinse in dilute bleach and air dry as described above for hand washed dishes.

#### Is potentially contaminated water safe for washing clothes?

- **Yes**, it is safe to wash clothes as long as they are completely dried before being worn.

#### Can I use tap water for bathing and shaving?

- The water may be used by healthy individuals for showering, bathing, shaving, and washing. Take care not to swallow water and avoid shaving nicks.
- People with open wounds, cuts, blisters or recent surgical wounds and people who are immunocompromised or suffer from chronic illness should use boiled water (then cooled) or bottled water.
- Children and disabled individuals should be supervised to ensure water is not ingested. Sponge bathing is advisable, and minimize bathing time to further reduce the potential for ingestion.

### **Can I brush my teeth with the water without boiling it?**

- No! Any water you ingest or place in your mouth should be disinfected by boiling (and then cooled) or be bottled.

### **How should I wash my hands during a boil water notice?**

- Generally, vigorous washing with soap and your tap water is safe for basic personal hygiene.
- If you are washing your hands to prepare food, you should use boiled (then cooled) water or bottled water.

### **Can I use hand sanitizing lotion or wipes?**

- Hand sanitizing wipes alone are not enough, especially to clean your hands for making food. Alcohol based sanitizers may not be effective against all contaminants.

### **What infectious organisms might be present in contaminated water?**

- In New York State they may include: protozoa like Giardia and Cryptosporidium; bacteria such as Shigella and E. coli; and viruses.
- These organisms can affect the gastrointestinal system, with or without fever, and result in: diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, and vomiting. Most of these illnesses are not usually serious or life threatening except in the elderly, the very young or people who are immunocompromised. Skin contact can also lead to infection.

### **What if I have already consumed potentially contaminated water?**

- Illness is possible, especially for people that already have a chronic illness or are immunocompromised. Anyone experiencing symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and abdominal cramps should seek medical attention. These symptoms—with or without fever—are not unique to exposure to contaminated water and a doctor's involvement and medical testing are needed to identify the cause of illness.

### **What should homeowners do when the boil water notice is lifted?**

- First, flush household pipes/faucets first. Run all your cold water faucets on full for at least five minutes each. If your service connection is long or complex (like in an apartment building) consider flushing for a longer period.
- Automatic ice makers: dump existing ice and flush by making and discarding three batches of ice cubes. Wipe down the ice bin with a disinfectant. If your water feed line to the machine is longer than 20 feet, make and discard five batches.
- Hot water heaters, water coolers, in line filters, and other appliances with direct water connections: run enough water to completely replace at least one full volume of all lines and tanks.
- If your filters are near the end of their life, replace them.
- Water softeners: run through a regeneration cycle.
- Reverse Osmosis (RO) units: replace pre filters, and check owner's manual.
- Replace any other disposable water filters, as they may be contaminated (for example, carbon filters that are near the end of their life.)

### **What are acceptable alternate sources for safe drinking water?**

- Alternate water sources include bottled water, water from an unaffected public water supply, water from a tanker provided by an emergency response agency, and water delivered by a NY State certified bulk water provider.